

New Snare Drums

FOR 2015



By Bob Saydlowski

Call it the main voice in the choir. Your backbeat maker.

However you frame it, the snare drum is the most integral part of modern drum set playing. To some (myself included), snare drums are like potato chips — you can't have just one. But no matter how many or few you own, you can't live without its 2 and 4, ghost notes, rim-clicks, or buzz rolls.

It's a noble challenge. We're all hunting for the One True Snare that fits like our most comfortable pair of shoes. But with so many available models

out there — wood, metal, hybrid, composite, shallow, deep, wrapped, lacquered, re-rings, or not — it can be tough to know where to start.

In an effort to make some sense of it all, we gathered the following information on new snare drum models introduced for 2015, and assembled them into bite-sized categories to help you compare and contrast. We sincerely hope you find your One True Snare among them.

OLD STANDBYS

1 Maple, mahogany, and birch have been mainstays of snare drum construction for almost as long as there have been



2 The Inlay Series from England's Liberty Drums offers a choice of two inlay strip treatments.

snare drums. The tradition remains as strong as ever this year with a flood of new models, including the Johnny C. Series, named after the Craviotto master drum builder, Johnny Craviotto. A new take on the company's popular Diamond

1 The Johnny C. Series lowers the cost of 1-ply Craviotto drums to a price range for the rest of us.

Cast solid single-ply maple snare, the series is available in 14" x 5.5" and 14" x 6.5" sizes, which both feature a new streamlined lug design that enhances shell resonance. MAP is \$649, which should help make the highly regarded Craviotto imprint a bit easier to obtain.

Previously fashioned from only birch, walnut, and cherry woods, Tradition snare drums from the **Geo. H. Way Drum Company** are now offered in mahogany as well. With eight Tuxedo lugs, a beer-tap throw off, and 4-ply shell with 4-ply re-rings, a mahogany Tradition model has a \$549 street price.

What's in a name? Well, when it comes to the new KeeGee snare drum from **Grover Pro Percussion**, it's a reference to the soft orchestral percussion excerpt from Prokofiev's "Lieutenant Kijé





3 Tama's new 14" x 6.5" birch snare, introduced through the company's expansive S.L.P. (Sound Lab Project) series

Suite" (but you already guessed that, right?). In addition to its 10-ply cross-laminated maple shell and super-piccolo size of 14" x 3", The KeeGee has single-point mini tube lugs, triple-flange hoops, nonspiral snare wires, and a high gloss finish. Designed at the request of St. Louis Symphony principal percussionist Will James, the extra-shallow shell makes for greater snare response. MSRP is \$500 on the nose.

Those clever folks at **PDP** have found a cool way to lend an earthy vibe to a basic maple shell with the new Concept Black Wax Over Maple snare drum. Its hand-applied wax coat not only provides a dramatic dark matte finish that smartly presents the wood grain, but also provides a protective seal for the shell. The drum comes with the ultra-efficient DW MAG throw-off and True-Pitch tuning rods. It's available in a multitude of sizes, including 10" x 6", 12" x 6", 13" x 5.5", 13" x 7", 14" x 5.5", and 14" x 6.5". These snare drums are offered at a quite reasonable range of \$233.99–\$283.99 MSRP.

2 What's that sound coming across the pond? It's very possibly a couple new 15-ply, 8mm Finnish birch snare drums introduced this year by England's **Liberty Drums**. The Liquid Pearl model has a Liquid Oyster Pearl finish, while the Inlay Series features a strip of inlay (in a choice of a thin racing stripe or series of

tiny boxes enclosed in a ribbon). These ornaments either circle the shell or swirl at a 45-degree angle around its perimeter. MSRP is \$577–\$619. Liberty also introduced a Natural Mahogany snare, which features an 8-ply shell with 4-ply reinforcing rings, which comes with either a clear hard wax or gloss lacquer finish at \$644–\$699.

Famous for spinning out highly decorative and wildly edgy custom drums that seemed destined for Warped Tour stages, **SJC** has reversed course by adding a more conventional production maple drum to its family this year.

4 Not enough snare sounds? Black Swamp's 20th Anniversary Multisonic snare drum delivers bundles of them.



The 14" x 6.5" 10-ply maple model is available in either a Natural or Black Ribbonwood finish, and is supplied with single tube lugs, 2.3mm hoops, and a black Trick strainer for an MSRP of \$599.

3 Birch is prized for its natural resonance that peaks in high and low frequencies, which explains why it's so often used to build speaker cabinets. However, that distinctive natural EQ also makes it highly adaptable to drum shells, such as **Tama's** new 14" x 6.5" birch snare. Introduced through the company's expansive S.L.P. (Sound Lab Project) series, its 10-ply, 11mm-thick all-birch shell is wrapped in an outer ply of highly figured natural finish birch for an exquisite exterior appearance. It comes fitted with brass tube lugs, 20-strand Starclassic carbon steel Snappy snare wires, a die-cast batter hoop, and a steel Mighty Hoop for the bottom (a combination that is becoming more popular these days). \$483.32 MSRP.

EXCEPTIONAL EXOTICS

4 Forests of the world yield far more species than just maple, birch, or poplar, and as the veneer gets more rare, the

drum's appearance can become even more breathtaking. Such is the case with the bocote used to make **Black Swamp's** 20th Anniversary Multisonic snare drum. A dense, yellowish-brown hardwood with dramatic dark-to-black stripes, bocote is native to Mexico and Central/South America. The snare is outfitted with straight hoops and claw hooks, plus a sterling silver micro inlay circling the center of the shell. But the big news lies in the many snare options packed into this single drum. In addition to Black Swamp's Multisonic snare system, which lets users activate five separate snare units (gold cable, blue cable, stainless steel, wire wound cable, and curly wire cable), the 20th Anniversary model includes the new internal Infinity Snare System, which rests just under the batter head. So if you currently can't get enough snare sounds, you'd better act fast because only 20 will be made. Available in 14" x 5", 14" x 5.5", and 14" x 6.5" sizes, each comes with its own padded case, a certificate of authenticity, and a custom plate with the owner's name. \$1,732 MSRP.

Snare drums don't pop out of gum ball machines, but we still can't get that image out of our heads as we think about the new blue gum wood Limited Edition 14" x 6.5" snare drum from **Chicago Custom Percussion**. Its 10-ply shell is finished in a protective coating and adorned with full-length tube lugs and single-flanged hoops gleaming in an Aztec Gold coat. Other fittings include a Trick throw-off, the company's classic round badge, and Evans heads. Prices range from \$350 to \$700.

5 **Hendrix Drums** unveiled new classes of wood species in 2015 for its ultra-thin 0.25" solid stave shell drums. Class 1 Woods include standard maple, ash, mahogany, and birch (\$1,499 MSRP for satin finish, \$1,699 for gloss). But Class 2 Woods go more exotic, with bubinga, padauk, birdseye

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maple, curly maple, purpleheart, tigerwood, leopardwood, and jarrah, as well as a heritage oak model (\$1,629 for satin, \$1,809 for gloss). Specialty Woods represent the top level and have fluctuating pricing depending on availability. These include super-exotics like bacote, quilted maple, cocobolo, and rosewood. In addition to all these wood options, the drums can be built with wood hoops or inlays as custom features, and come with aluminum distance-adjustable lugs and S-Hoops. We got a chance to play around with the sapele and heritage oak models, and you can read our impression on page 86.

6 After severing ties with Yamaha and making a big splash with its introduction into the U.S. market a couple

5 The top-of-the-line Hendrix snare in bubinga hardwood with abalone inlay and black burst gloss finish

years ago, **Sakae** has settled into the job of drum making, and this year introduced its new Japanese Cypress Stave snares. Harvested from conifer trees planted years ago to address the housing needs of the expanding Japanese population, these snares feature compressed staves of sustainable Japanese Cypress with vertically aligned grain figuring. According to the company, this unique compression process creates a more durable shell with a tight and controlled sound. Sakae Japanese Cypress snares are available in 14" x 5" and 14" x 6.5" sizes.

Tama reached new heights with the introduction of the classy Star Series a couple years back, and has added a new 7mm solid 1-ply Zebra wood model to the collection for this year. Available in 14" x 6", the



7 The 14" x 7" Bare Knuckle Brawler is a brass shell snare from DDrum's Modern Tone series.

oil-finished shell is banded by an outer wood inlay, cut with bearing edges that are rounder than typical Tama edges, and includes inner 7mm Sound Focus reinforcement rings. Outfitted with eight lugs, die-cast hoops, and the Linear Drive throw-off and butt, the drum's MSRP is \$1,647. How does it sound? Check out our review of the Star Zebra wood on page 82 to find out!

PRECIOUS METALS

With only rare exceptions, drum kit shells are most often made of wood. But there are sound reasons why many drummers prefer metal shells for snare drums. So if you want your snare to cut through loud volumes, shout with lots of brightness and richness, and respond with a musical amount of overtone ring when you smack that rimshot, a metal shell snare is probably in your future. Here are a few of the latest options.

Those meticulous designers at **Canopus** have launched the new Solid Metal snare drum series with the introduction of two new brass-shell models. Featuring extra hefty 3mm seamless solid brass shells, the drums are outfitted with a black nickel-plated strainer, as well as black nickel-plated solid brass die-cast hoops and eight nickel-plated solid brass tube lugs. Man, they pack a heck of a lot of brass

into these 14" x 5" (\$2,142.85 MSRP) and 14" x 6.5" (\$2,500) babies!

After commanding the upper reaches of the snare drum market for years, **Craviotto Drum Company** has begun to develop instruments aimed at midrange buyers, including the new Solitaire snare drum. Made from a thin wall of aero-grade aluminum formed and rolled in the U.S., the drums include a dual diamond venting system modeled after the signature wood inlays found on the company's 1-ply wood Custom Shop drums. Outfitted with low mass single-point solid brass diamond tube lugs, triple flange hoops, Craviotto custom snare wires, and a Trick GS007 throw-off, Solitaire snares are available in Matte Black and Aged Pewter finishes at 14" x 5.5" and 14" x 6.5" sizes (\$795 MAP for both sizes).

7 Never one to pussyfoot around when it's time to christen a new model, **DDrum** has added two macho sounding brass shell snare drums to its Modern Tone series. The 14" x 6.5" Hammer has a 1.5mm brass shell with brass exterior finish and chromed hardware, including double-ended turret lugs, die-cast hoops, and a Dunnett throw-off for \$762 MSRP. And the 14" x 7" Bare Knuckle Brawler features a rolled brass shell with a



6 Sakae's Cypress Stave snares are made from sustainable Japanese Cypress.



8 The Classic Blue Steel from Dunnett Classic Drums comes in a raw finish.

center bead, an aged patina finish, nickel tube lugs, triple-flanged hoops, and Dunnett throw-off for \$762.

8 Speaking of Dunnett, if you took an inventory of drum makers best known for flawless metal shell snare drums, Ronn Dunnett's name would top the list. Although Dunnett suffered a traumatic accident late last year (from which he's now fully recovered), his **Dunnett Classic Drums** unveiled a number of very cool instruments made from a range of metals in 2015, including the new Classic Blue Steel model. Available in 14" x 6.5" and 14" x 7" sizes, the snare comes in a raw finish, chrome tube lugs, and the renowned Dunnett R-4 throw-off at a \$725 street price.

9 The new Black Brass snare from DW is the latest member of the Design Series.



A born tinkerer, Dunnett experimented with hybrid bearing edges on his new 2N Modeling aluminum snare drum. On the batter is a flanged edge, but the bottom is straight with a deep, wide snare bed. It has a seamed shell, is fitted with eight chrome-plated aluminum tube lugs, and is adorned with a polished natural aluminum finish that will age and patina over time. \$725 street price.

Dunnett also introduced a 14" x 6.5" 3mm bronze-shelled snare, which can be lathed in various patterns. At first Ronn thought of calling it The Sonic Alchemist, but on second thought — nah! Still anonymous at press time, the drum has eight lugs and is priced at \$1,495 with triple-flanged hoops. Die-cast or matching bronze hoops are optional.

9 Let's get back to brass with the new Black Brass snare drum from DW. The latest member of the Design Series features a 1mm rolled and beaded black brass shell fitted with the company's MAG throw-off, TruePitch tension rods, and DW Reverse Dot heads by Remo. Offered in two sizes, the Design Series Black Brass snare won't break the bank, with MSRP of \$466.99 for the 14" x 5.5" model and \$499.99 for the 14" x 6.5".

Bell brass snares are a favorite of studio engineers because of the love affair snare microphones have with their combination of certain warm wood characteristics and the cut of a metal drum. This was **Gretsch's** year to jump into the game with the new USA Bell Brass snare, which features



10 The Copperphonic snare from Ludwig is available in 14" x 5" and 14" x 6.5" sizes.

a 3mm 14" x 6.5" shell with 30-degree bearing edges, ten lugs, and die-cast hoops for a \$1,540.98 MSRP.

Back across the Atlantic, British drum maker **Liberty** unveiled its take on a Black Brass snare. To set itself apart from the black brass pack, the Liberty gang took a hammer to the shell, sculpting deep, random indentations that lend a very cool texture to the black nickel finish. The drum has 20 die-cast lugs per side and includes a George Way throw-off. MSRP is \$699.

10 Only a few companies have introduced copper shelled drums in the past, but

Ludwig has taken the plunge with the new Copperphonic. Built to the same standards as the company's popular Supraphonic snare, the drum features a 1.2mm copper shell with a dark, raw copper finish, Imperial lugs, and 2.3mm hoops. The Copperphonic is available in a 14" x 5" size at \$1,156 and 14" x 6.5" at \$1,188 (both MSRPs).

We saw a couple new black nickel-over-steel drums roll out this year, including a new Concept Series model from **PDP**, which has a dual-beaded 1mm rolled steel shell as well as the DW MAG throw-off. A variety of sizes is available: 10" x 6", 12" x 6", 13" x 6.5", 14" x 5.5", and 14" x 6.5", which clock in with an MSRP between \$299.99 and \$383.99. **SJC** also introduced its own

14" x 6.5" version, which has a center-beaded steel shell, single tube lugs, and 2.3mm hoops. MSRP is \$419.

Need even more choices? Then check out the new **Tama S.L.P. Big Black Steel**, which has a hefty 1mm steel shell and a matte black finish. MSRPs are \$416.65 (14" x 8") and \$250 (14" x 6.5"). But if you're looking for something a bit smaller, the Tama Metalworks line now has 10" x 5" (\$280) and 12" x 5" (\$240) 1.2mm steel shells, also in black nickel finish. Finally, Tama's new S.L.P. Dynamic

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Bronze snare features a 1.2mm hairline bronze shell, ten brass tube lugs, and die-cast hoops for \$666.95.

You probably recognize the initials "W.F.L." William F. Ludwig was, of course, the founder of Ludwig Drum Company, and now his grandson Bill Ludwig III has started the **WFL III** company. His flagship drum, the 14" x 6.5" Classic III, includes a 3mm aluminum shell, without a center bead, and features machined double 45-degree bearing edges (not rolled like some), direct-thread lugs, and a Trick multistep throw-off and butt. A gloss black powder-coat base with heavy metal flake silver top coat completes the look. Available in Black Sparkle or White Sparkle, with a \$676 MSRP.

MIX & MATCH

11 Anything goes in the hybrid market, where drum companies continue to blend every possible variation of wood species, metals, and even synthetics in search of alternative sounds and options. New models keep cropping up, like **Canopus'** Neo-Vintage M4 snare drum. Not only does its shell feature a blend of maple and poplar, but the company has also toyed with the lug configuration by



12 The new Chad Smith TriColon snare uses Pearl's Free-Floating system to let users rearrange the shell's brass and steel rings.

for yourself. Finished in clear lacquer, the M4 is available in 14" x 6.5" at \$1,530.95 MSRP.

Capitalizing on its popular Edge snare drums, **DW** has taken the concept topsy-turvy with the Reverse Edge models. This new design has a cast aluminum center and your choice of walnut or maple top and bottom rings — a complete reversal on the original Edge concept that featured wood in the center ring sandwiched by brass. It comes with the MAG throw-off and 3-point butt, and is available in 14" x 6" and 14" x 7" sizes. MSRPs are \$1,705–\$2,105.

12 If you aren't satisfied with having just one type of metal in your snare shell, you should definitely look into **Pearl's** new 14" x 6.5" Chad Smith TriColon snare. Taking its inspiration from the Latin phrase meaning "I came, I saw, I conquered," it features two 3mm clear-lacquered rolled rings (picture short shells sized slightly more than 2" deep) made of brass and one of steel, all housed in Pearl's Free-Floating frame. The rings can be stacked in any arrangement you choose to attain a variety of tonal combinations. Only a limited number of drums are available in the U.S. at a \$1,599 MSRP.

RETRO NEVER GETS RUSTY

13 Drummers are a funny bunch. We want to play faster, louder, and more complex figures than every drummer

and a Trick GS007 strainer. The net result is the classic look and sound of drums used in the swing era. MSRP is \$1,695.

Sonor introduced its Vintage Series drum kits this year, and as expected, a couple new snare drums accompanied the launch. Shells are 9-ply, 6mm cross-laminated beech with rounded bearing edges for a warm sound. They come with the Super50 throw-off and Superprofil triple-flanged steel hoops — both inspired by the ones used on Sonor drums in the 1950s. Chrome-plated Vintage lugs mount to the shell in a staggered side-by-side sequence and, to lend a touch of modern technology to the design, are equipped with Sonor's TuneSafe system to prevent rods from loosening. Available in 14" x 5.75" (\$1,279 MSRP) and 14" x 6.5" (\$1,299) models in either Vintage Onyx, Vintage Natural, or Vintage Pearl finishes.

ALL STARS

Dating back to Krupa (and maybe earlier), artist model drums have been designed to appeal to players who want to capture the sound of their drumming idols. But even if you aren't a diehard fan of any of the following stars, their snare drums still have plenty of merit of their own accord.

14 Gregg Bissonette recently became a key artist for **Dixon**, and the company



11 The Canopus Neo-Vintage M4 sports an uneven distribution of its 18 single-post lugs.

mounting 12 single-post lugs around the batter side and six around the resonant side. What the — huh? Canopus claims the arrangement yields a mellow and dry sound. Better put a stick on it and find out



13 Chicago Custom Percussion has expanded its Classic line of old-school maple, maple/poplar/maple, and mahogany snare drums.



14 One of two new Gregg Bissonette signature snares from Dixon

wasted no time in issuing two different snare drums with the Bissonette name on them. While both are 14" x 6.5" models with a black nickel finish and adjustable butt plate, one has a hammered brass beaded shell with tube lugs (\$799.99 MSRP) while the other is made of flat steel with conventional double-ended lugs (\$439.99). Dixon also introduced an artist model for endorser Mel Gaynor of Simple Minds fame. His drum is a 14" x 6" Artisan snare with tube lugs and die-cast hoops mounted to a North American maple shell wrapped with an exterior Zebrawood veneer. 639.99.

Dunnett Classic Drums also got into the artist model market with the new Gergo Borlai Desi2Nate snare drum, which has a 14" x 6.5" heavy bronze shell and Dunnett's hybrid edges. The polished and lacquered exterior is fitted with a "GB" coin badge and is available with a choice of triple-flanged, die-cast, or MR machine bronze hoops. Its street price is \$875.

Neil Peart fans get a piece of the action with DW's new 14" x 6.5" R40 snare drum. Identical to the one in Peart's 40th anniversary touring kit, the snare is made of 13-ply Romanian River Oak dredged up after 500 years at the bottom of a bog. These highly decorative shells feature exotic inlay artwork from previous Rush albums and are fitted with gold-plated hardware and the DW MAG throw-off with a three-position butt plate. The R40 comes with a deluxe DW snare drum bag and certificate of authenticity (but don't expect to see many copycats crop up). Only 250 will be made, and a percentage of the purchase price will benefit Peart's charity of choice. MSRP is \$2,307.55.

Want your own "signature" snare drum? DW hears you, and will laser cut your initials into vintage shield inlays on the new Exotic Monogram model. Made from 11-ply North American hard rock maple using the company's HVL technology, the drum is available in two wood combos (African bubinga with birdseye maple inlay or birdseye with bubinga inlay) in either natural gloss lacquer or natural satin. Each drum comes with a DW snare bag and certificate of authenticity and, as usual with DW, a choice of five hardware colors (chrome, satin chrome, nickel, black nickel, and gold). Available sizes include 14" x 5", 14" x 5.5", 14" x 6, 14" x 6.5", and 14" x 7". MSRP is \$1,539–\$1,693.

15 **Mapex** introduced a trio of new artist models in the Black Panther series this year with personal input from some key endorsers. The Russ Miller Versatus (\$789 MSRP) is a hybrid mahogany/maple shell measuring 14" x 4.625" in Transparent Cherry finish. Miller designed the drum with a combination of bearing edges (a 45-degree reinforced top edge and a rounded non-reinforced 35-degree bottom edge). MSRP is \$789. The 12" x 5.5" Chris Adler Warbird (\$649) has a 6-ply 5.1mm maple/walnut shell, SONIClear bearing edges, black plated fittings, and huge engraved "Warbird" graphics on opposing sides of

the shell. Brass is the shell of choice for the 14" x 6" Matt Halpern Wraith snare drum (\$789), which comes in satin black finish, Black Panther 45-degree bearing edges, and nine vents in the shell to add a touch of dryness to the sound. All three drums include Sonic Saver hoops that reduce stick wear, a cylinder-drive strainer, and the artist's choice of snare wires and heads. Plus, for the ultimate coolness factor, they all come with a booklet that is hand-signed by the artist.

Abe Cunningham of The Deftones now has his own signature snare, courtesy of **Tama**. The 14" x 6" brass shell sports a special Blue Grind finish and features four 2" vent holes for fast air dispersion, brass tube lugs, and die-cast hoops at an MSRP of \$1,231. Tama also upgraded the Kenny Aronoff Trackmaster 14" x 5" brass snare (\$1,154) to include die-cast hoops and Evans heads.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Pearl introduced a number of Limited Edition Philharmonic snare drums over the course of the year, each 14" x 5" in size and featuring the Triad strainer system with three individually adjustable snare assemblies. Only 75 of each model (with a deluxe padded bag) will be made at an MSRP of \$1,675. In January, Pearl issued a 6-ply maple in White Marine Pearl and gold-plated



15 The Russ Miller Versatus snare from Mapex's Black Panther line features a hybrid mahogany/maple shell measuring 14" x 4.625".

tube lugs. Then April saw a 20-ply Tama ash/maple/birch drum in Black Fade Lacquer. And July's release was a 6-ply bubinga/maple/bubinga combo in natural bubinga and walnut burst lacquer. Then in October, you can look forward to a 1-ply VectorCast with ARL hardware.


Tama also introduced some Limited 1.2mm steel snare drums with black nickel hardware over the summer at \$416.65 MSRP each. The company released the first batch in Copper Lacquer in June, and then produced even more in Satin Indigo Metallic in July. Tama wrapped up August with another limited run finished in Satin Bronze Lacquer with chrome hardware (this one lists at \$333.32).

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

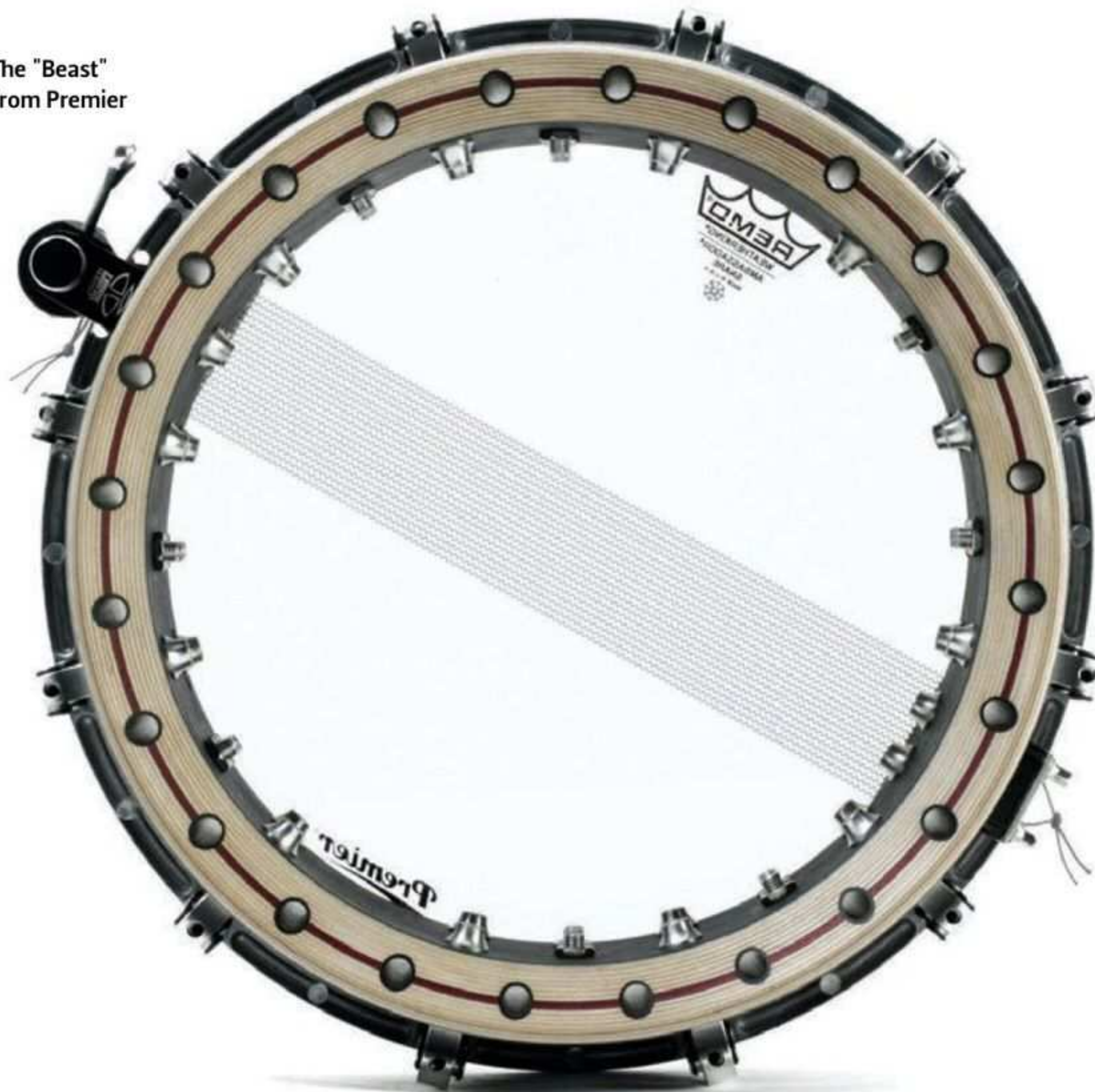
No kidding. Bill Detamore of **Pork Pie** and cymbalsmith Matt Bettis got together to create the Bettis B20 Bronze snare drum. Nope, it's not a bronze shell. It's 8-ply maple. Nope, the hoops aren't bronze, either. They're triple-flanged steel. But the wrap is fashioned from cymbal shavings. Bettis made a few cymbals and saved the

shavings to create the wrap, which, let's just say, isn't your everyday sparkle finish. Pork Pie is releasing 14" x 6.5", 13" x 7", and 14" x 8" drums at a street price of around \$300. Who knows? Maybe you can get a good ride sound from the drum's finish.

16 Premier has taken shell building to new heights with The Beast. Don't be scared. "Beast" is actually an acronym for "British Engineered Air-Flow Shell Technology," in which sonic chambers and optimally placed vents circulate air through and out of the

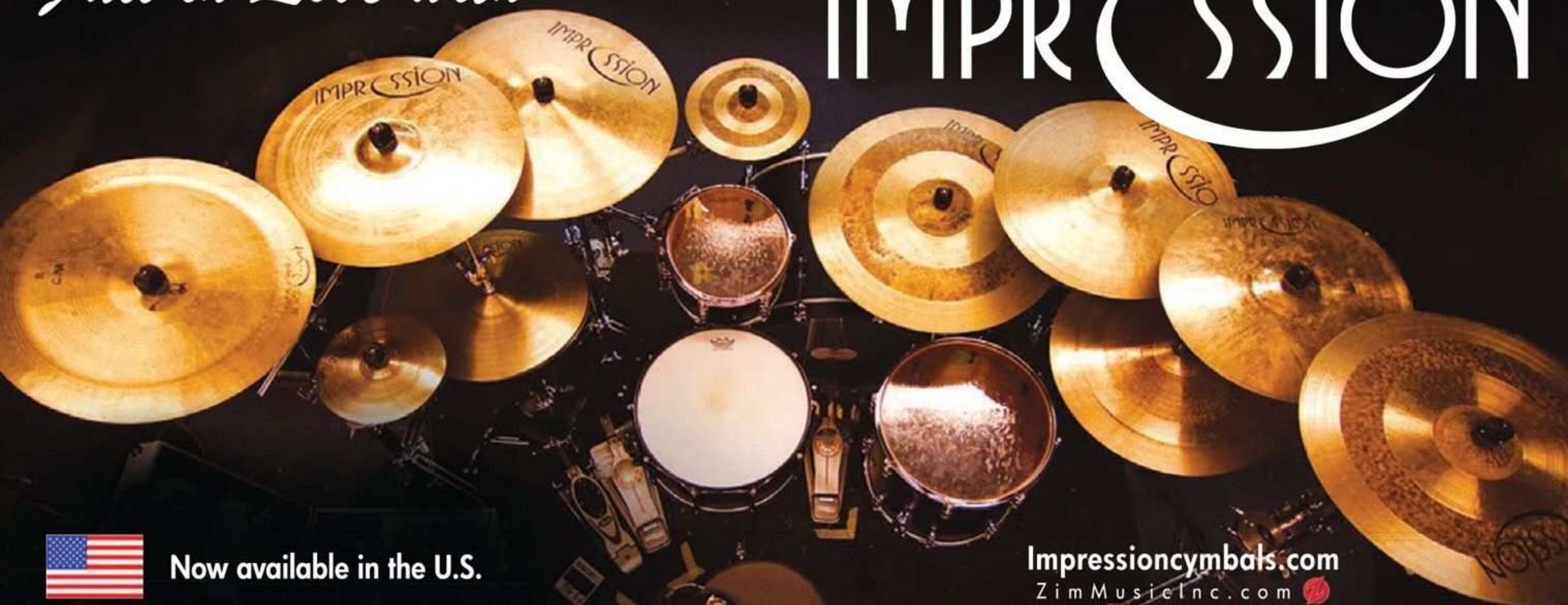
drum's 50-ply, 28mm shell. Handmade from a combination of birch, tulip, sycamore, oak, and maple, the shell is fitted with cast aluminum hoops and solid machined aluminum lugs with stainless steel inserts. You can tame your own Beast for around \$3,500 MSRP. 

16 The "Beast" from Premier



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